

Weekly Report
Special Enforcement Area
September 25 – October 1, 2003

Monroe County

On September 25, Officer Steve Dion arrested a Navy journalist for DUI. The incident began at a red light at the intersection of Truman and Eisenhower, Key West. After the light turned green, the officer noticed a flicker of light from his side-view mirror. Apparently the vehicle behind him was so close to patrol vehicle that it was impossible to see the vehicle in his rearview mirror. The officer accelerated and moved slightly to the right to create a safe distance and keep the vehicle in view, however, the vehicle barreled past him causing the officer to take evasive action by turning into a parking lot. He observed the driver passing in a no passing zone over solid, double yellow lines, and into a marked median. The officer initiated a traffic stop just as the operator turned into Sigsbee Navy Base. The operator had very blood shot eyes, slurred speech, fumbled around for his driver's license and exhibited numerous clues during field sobriety tasks. Although the subject initially submitted to a test of his breath during the testing he stopped and suddenly refused to continue. He was arrested for DUI and refusal to submit to a test of his breath. Before the officer left the jail, the subject said he was glad at least that he hadn't hurt anyone.

Sanctuary Officer Bill Green issued a federal citation to a Clermont resident after a fisheries inspection at Sombrero Light revealed crawfish violations.

On September 27, Officer David Graham responded to a report of a PWC with two POB's taking on water. The initial information from U. S. Coast Guard reported the distressed boaters along the mangroves from Jewfish Creek into the entrance of Barnes Sound. However, the officer was unable to locate the PWC. Follow-up contacts with the distressed caller revealed their location was near Card Sound Bridge, not Jewfish Creek. The officer located the two subjects who had suffered no injuries and assisted them to safety.

Sanctuary Officer Scott LaRosa and Officer Christopher Mattson responded to a distress call where 3 POB's were reportedly in the water off of Holiday Isle. The call was received by U. S. Coast Guard over VHF 16. A search of numerous areas around the location was unsuccessful, however the subjects were eventually located by another party. No further action was taken by FWC.

Sanctuary Officer Lance Burdette responded to a report of a male subject jumping off the Cow Key Channel Bridge. U. S. Coast Guard also responded by water and dispatched a helicopter from Miami. One witness said he saw someone jump then heard a person yelling, however interviews with fishermen along the channel provided conflicting information. Some said they never saw or heard anything, and others said they believed the man entered the water voluntarily to go swimming. No agency received any report of a missing person. The next day, after further investigation, the search was called off.

On September 28, 0100 hours, Officer Torrey McAlpin was called out to assist Monroe County Deputies who received a complaint of shots fired in Boot Key Harbor. The officer met deputies at Dock Side Marina and relayed them to the suspect boat, 200 yards off the marina. When they arrived they discovered a couple engaged in a dispute. The couple had been arguing for the past few hours, but denied having fired any weapons. The man explained that he had struck the side of his boat a few times which might have sounded like a shot being fired. Deputies searched the vessel but found no firearms. Afterward, the couple was separated and the man was transported to shore.

Sanctuary Officer Bill Green responded to a report of a vessel grounding off Spanish Harbor Bridge, observed by Billy Causey, Superintendent of Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. The officer arrived, marked the location where the 35' commercial fishing vessel ran hard aground, then issued a federal citation. A marine salvager was scheduled to remove the vessel at high tide.

On September 29, Officer Jay Marvin responded to a complaint of two rotting alligator carcasses located near the dock of a local restaurant in Lower Matecumbe. When the officer arrived he identified two carcasses approximately 3 to 4 days old. Two of the carcasses were missing tails and the larger alligator was missing its head. The smaller alligator had a shotgun type wound through the top of its head. Lieutenant Pat Reynolds and Lieutenant Bill Trubey estimated the alligators to be 7 and 12 feet in length when in whole condition. Officer Marvin's investigation revealed the alligators had been legally harvested by a Key Largo resident. The subject was warned and instructed next time to dispose of the carcass in its natural habitat and not in a public place. Sanctuary Officer Scott LaRosa assisted by relocating the carcasses off shore.

On September 30, Sanctuary Officer David McDaniel responded to a complaint where a boater was trolling through Molasses Reef SPA. The complainant had even observed the fisherman catch a fish and keep it. The officer arrived a few minutes later only to discover the 25' Wellcraft had set anchor and all the occupants were swimming. However, during an inspection the owner of the boat, a Miami man, confessed to trolling through the SPA and catching a barracuda. In addition, the officer observed an unsecured spear gun lying on the deck of the boat. The operator was issued a citation for possession of a spear gun in the Key Largo Marine Sanctuary and warned for fishing within the SPA, failure to possess a Florida Saltwater Fishing License, and failure to present a vessel registration certificate. The barracuda was returned to the resource.

For Pilot John Murphy, much of the week was hampered by rainy weather and maintenance issues on the airplane. After getting the plane into service he flew L.E. air patrol flights on Tuesday and Wednesday in support of Special Enforcement Area and Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary operations. On Tuesday he responded to a report of a vessel robbing traps ocean side of Sunshine Key and assisted FWC and Sanctuary water units. They were unable to detect any violations. Later, at Bullfrog Bank, he observed a crawfish aerial display violation on a commercial boat working traps. The next day Pilot Murphy attempted to locate a suspect who is required to contact FWC as a condition of probation prior to leaving the dock but had not done so. Eventually he located the boat working crawfish traps near Upper Harbor Key Light. After an hour of high recon surveillance he did not observe any violations, then directed an FWC water unit to the boat. Officer Andy Zamonis boarded the vessel and issued a warning for failure to comply with the condition of his probation by advising FWC prior to

departing the dock. Further action is pending contact with the fisherman's probation officer.

On October 1, Officer Andy Zamonis located a suspect BOLO vessel, that was reportedly taking undersize crawfish. The officer was driving northbound on Niles Channel Bridge when he identified the suspect vessel and requested the assistance of Sanctuary Officer Rama Shuster who was on water patrol. In the mean time, the officer maintained surveillance on the vessel with its diver in the water from a vantage point on land. The officers believed the suspect vessel would likely return to his home dock in Ramrod Key, however, when the diver surfaced, Officer Zamonis observed the diver toss a catch bag into the boat, quickly exit the water and race the boat to a residential area at the west end of Niles Channel Bridge. The officer quickly followed the boat to the opposite end of the bridge and observed the vessel enter one of the canals behind Summerland Seafood. He was able to intercept the man just after he docked his boat and exited onto private property with catch bag in hand. An initial fisheries inspection revealed 11 crawfish with 2 undersized. The situation raised further suspicion since the subject, a local resident of Ramrod Key, did not reside at the location where he exited the boat. When asked to explain why he was off loading his catch somewhere other than at his own home, the subject could not give an explanation. A thorough inspection of the vessel revealed boating safety violations and a small amount of marijuana. An inspection of the property revealed an orange, commercial sized basket filled with live crawfish. In total, the officers counted 35 crawfish, 11 were undersized. The man, son of former owners of a popular local marina and resort, explained he was only trying to get his limit of crawfish. He also tried to convince the officers he wasn't going to sell the crawfish, but was going to send the crawfish to his father. The man was charged for possession of 29 over the bag limit and 11 undersize crawfish.

Sanctuary Officer David McDaniel issued a citation to a Miami man for spear fishing in the Upper Keys at the Triangles Reef. The officer also issued 6 warnings for various other violations.

Total documented vessel groundings for this week: 6
Total documented turtle incidents for this week: 0

Collier County

On September 24, Officer Baryl Martin responded to a report of a bear killing livestock off Rabbit Run Road, Naples. The complainant had pictures of the bear and said the bear had already killed a couple of his pigs. The officer instructed the complainant not to shoot the bear and the incident was turned over to a biologist.

On September 25, FWC Biologist Joe Bazzo was contacted as a result of a vehicle accident caused by a bear. Initially, Collier County Sheriff's Office contacted FWC dispatch to advise a bear had been struck by several vehicles on County Road 951. One vehicle rolled over as a result of the collision and the female operator was transported to a medical facility. The biologist described the bear as "huge," larger than 6' tall and well over 300 pounds with a red ear tag, indicating the bear had been captured before. He also explained during this time of year all bears instinctively prepare for winter hibernation even though Florida bears do not actually hibernate. They

are likely to forage for food as their natural food sources dwindle. Deputies initially reported the bear was alive, however, by the time Joe Bazzo arrived, the bear was dead.

On September 26, Officer Timothy Kiss responded to a boating accident in the Barren River where an airboat with six passengers was swamped by a commercial crab boat causing less than \$500 damage to the airboat. The commercial crab boat captain operating the vessel explained that he just had new diesel engines installed and was testing them. His wake swamped the 21' airboat causing it to sink in 5 feet of water. The captain did return to assist and no injuries occurred but the captain was issued a misdemeanor citation for violation of a Navigation Rule resulting in an accident. When the officer arrived on scene, NBC news was already on scene. The incident was broadcast on news channels over the course of the evening.

On September 27, Officers Edward Romig and Baryl Martin responded to a request for assistance from Seminole Police Department who discovered a mother alligator that had become separated from 10 of her babies. The officers arrived and successfully captured some of the babies and were able to relocate them.

On September 28, Officer Edward Romig arrested a man on a warrant at the Cocohatchee Boat Ramp. The warrant resulted from original charges of interference with a law enforcement officer.

On September 30, Lieutenant Craig Duval and Officers Josh Caraker and Timothy Kiss conducted a traffic stop on SR 29, north of Copeland Road Prison that resulted in one felony and two misdemeanor drug arrests.

Officer James Umhoefer issued a citation to a fisherman at Port of the Islands Spillway for possession of an untagged tarpon.